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The sinister submarine as a motif in contemporary legend and popular imagination

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Introduction

"I can think of no other machine that provokes such a wide range of emotions in human beings . . . most of all fear" says Tom McKendrick, Scots artist (McKendrick 1990:12), and McKendrick's own work, obsessed as it is with submarines and rusting metal textures, is powerful evidence for his claim. Think also of the occasion in 1992 when the Princess of Wales went to Barrow-in-Furness for the naming of the first Trident submarine, *HMS Vanguard*. Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament members held a national competition for an alternative name and among the submissions were *HMS Doomsday*, *HMS Deadend*, *HMS Subhuman*, and *HMS Indefensible* (Benjamin 1992). I also recall from this time, though I cannot document, the suggestion of *HMS Phalliform*. Would a new bomber have evoked such a response?

From its foreshadowing in the American War of Independence (Bushnell's *Turtle*) and its effective beginning in the Napoleonic Wars (Fulton's *Nautilus*), the submarine (or more correctly submersible) boat aroused fears and concerns quite disproportionate to its no-more-than-embryonic forms. In a letter to Fulton, Lord St. Vincent wrote, "Pitt was the greatest fool that ever existed to

encourage a mode of warfare which those who commanded the sea did not want, and which, if successful, would deprive them of it" (Jameson 1965:34). A century later, and despite vast technical developments, especially in France, Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson was still taking the same line, saying, "We cannot stop invention in this direction, but we can avoid doing anything to encourage it. Our naval policy has been consistent since Lord St. Vincent made his oft quoted remark" (Jameson:75). Wilson went on to reveal the sense of moral outrage evoked by the sinister image of the submarines with his oft quoted view that they were "underhand, unfair and damned un-English" (Compton-Hall 1983:31).

World War I

Jules Verne's classic *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and a host of other fictional treatments, often for the juvenile market, kept submarines, or rather fantasy submarines, very much in the forefront of public consciousness. Meanwhile, despite Admiralty misgivings about their general utility, real submarines were increasing in number and by 1914 Great Britain, with seventy-five, actually had the largest underwater fleet—though perhaps only twenty were ocean-going. Germany had only the fourth largest submarine fleet, lagging behind France and Russia, but it was the newest (van der Vat 1994:45). Few except the retired Lord Fisher had any real concept of the gravity of the submarine threat to Britain or an awareness that there were no real means of meeting the challenge except reprisals (van der Vat 1994:46).

One of the few civilians aware of the danger was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The vital importance of submarine development is the theme of his Sherlock Holmes story "The Bruce Partington Plans," and his 1911 story "The Last Galley," though in a classical setting, stresses the dangers of naval unpreparedness. It was, however, his story "Danger," published in 1912, that brought the question to public notice in a way that was to prove deeply embarrassing to Doyle. The story involved an attack on Britain by a minor power with a submarine fleet that, in its specifications, strongly resembled

that of Germany. In response to an article titled "Great Britain and the Next War," which openly claimed that Germany was planning a blockade by U-boats, Doyle actively campaigned during 1912-13 for countermeasures to be put in hand. Until war actually broke out, those in power were with few exceptions dismissive of such concerns. Ironically, when war did come and the U-boats left their expected coastal defence role to go on the offensive, Doyle's reward was to be featured in a *Times* story (18 February 1915) in which an anonymous American claimed that German officials had said Doyle's "Danger" story was the inspiration for Germany's blockade policy. In a follow-up story in the *New York Times* the German Naval Secretary, Admiral Capelle, was quoted as denying any German origin for the blockade idea, emphasising that "the real and only prophet was Conan Doyle." Doyle's distress at this remark was most understandable (Higham 1976:230-232).

Nevertheless the unpreparedness and indeed basic naïvete of the authorities is shown by the anti-submarine kits issued to guard boats at naval bases, each consisting of a black cloth bag and a hammer. On spotting an enemy periscope the guard boat was to row up to it, blind it with the black bag, and then shatter the glass with the hammer (Liddle 1985:98 re Portland; van der Vat 1994:45 re Scapa Flow). In 1916 the Admiralty attempted to train circus sea lions to track hostile submarines (BBC 1993). There were even rumours of seagulls being recruited (van der Vat 1994:44).

Two days after the outbreak of war, ten U-boats set off in search of British warships. *HMS Monarch* spotted the first torpedo of the war and *HMS Iron Duke* made the first periscope sighting. On August 9, 1914, *HMS Birmingham* rammed U-15, and U-13 was also lost from causes unknown. This ineffective first sortie caused disproportionate alarm at the Admiralty and after further (false) sightings the Grand Fleet left its base for open water. On September 3, U-21 sank the cruiser *Pathfinder* off St. Abbs Head. The feared submarine threat had become real.

"Submarine fever"—the phrase is Admiral Jameson's (1965: 138)—became endemic and paranoia rampant: "An extra order for petrol [which U-boats did not use] by a farmer living close to an

isolated bay aroused the darkest suspicion. Sheep lost on a Highland hillside had surely been ravished by these new marauders." A pattern was now set and endlessly replicated.

A popular play exploiting this atmosphere, "The Man Who Stayed at Home" by Lechmere Worrall and Harold Terry, was set in an east coast boarding house that was a rendezvous for spies who signalled U-boats waiting offshore. Soon these general rumours were to emerge as specific and concrete contemporary legends. It was triply unfortunate that Sir Edgar Speyer, a prominent Liberal financier and patron of the arts, should be of German origin (though naturalised in 1892), should have as his telegraphic address "Spy:London," and should live in a large house at Cromer, overlooking the North Sea. Rumour had him "signalling to U-boats, if not entertaining their crews" (Turner 1980:60, 101). Disgusted at this nonsense, Speyer left Britain for the United States.

D. H. Lawrence also fell victim to these fantasies, though a declared pacifist with a German wife could surely expect little else. Living as they did on the coast of Cornwall, Lawrence realised their vulnerability and had to restrain his wife from indulging in her Isadora Duncan–like capering on the beach "for fear she should be denounced for giving scarf signals to submarines" (Turner 1980:96). In 1992, a reviewer of John Carey's *The Intellectuals and the Masses* also recounted the tale of the Lawrences and their Cornish neighbours who "reported them for signalling to enemy submarines. The signals were supposed to be . . . by the smoke from the chimney of their house" (*Sunday Express*, 20 September 1992:33).

The novel *Zennor in Darkness* (Dunmore 1993) describes a young girl's encounter with the Lawrence household and again reports the local insistence that U-boats haunted the coast to seek out fuel dumps provided by traitors. The signals were sent by hanging differently coloured curtains in the windows (the Lawrences not being able to afford a matching set) or by chimney smoke (Dunmore 1993:*passim*). A variant calumny stuck in the memory of Margaret Needham, Lawrence's niece and only surviving relative. She recalls that "Uncle Bertie and his wife" were accused of "provisioning German submarines off the coast" (SAGA 1993:19, 20).

Similar rumours were rife in Malta during World War I. "In my younger days . . . I remember hearing stories of fishermen of Marsaxlokk who had become rich by exchanging food and other articles for gold when at sea, with the crews of German submarines . . . there was a similar rumour in Gozo. . . . During WWII I do not recollect such stories" (Cassar-Pullicino 1994).

The fantasy of secret signals and clandestine supplying was reinforced by the popular writer "Bartimeus" (Sir Lewis Ritchie, 1886-1967), whose work, while a little too sentimental for modern tastes, is a useful summary of class attitudes and popular stereotypes. His short story "Crab Pots" first appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* but was soon incorporated into the collection *A Tall Ship* (Bartimeus 1915), which remained in print well into the Second World War if not beyond. It tells of Lieutenant James Thorogood who, badly shaken when his ship is torpedoed, is urged to convalesce on the east coast and take plenty of exercise. On an evening walk by the sand dunes he encounters a tinker with a loaded cart. The tinker is a German spy carrying petrol to a secret rendezvous who betrays himself by absentmindedly cursing in German as James passes by. James turns back, hides, and watches the tinker light a signal fire and offload his forty-eight cans of petrol onto a U-boat. The spy arranges another meeting for the following Friday. Once alone, James seizes the spy and with some naval friends improvises mines from crab pots and destroys the submarine when it makes its next call. Ritchie's stories often have a strong autobiographical element but this one is pure fiction, though no doubt widely taken as true.

After Scapa Flow and the east coast, the west of Ireland became the favoured place for tales of secret bases. Perhaps the arrival of Roger Casement by submarine lent some credibility to the idea. Belief in these "secret supply" stories led to the careful control of petrol sales, even though those in authority knew no submarine used this fuel (Jameson 1965:175). Instead of increasing the effectiveness of countermeasures, this notion of lurking submarines had an unforeseen side effect. The constant flow of alleged sightings that "would have made the Loch Ness monster green with envy" meant that "patrols were concentrated inshore and the hapless merchant ships

[were] being advised to proceed in mid-Channel" (Jameson 1965:*op. cit.*). At long last, by trial and error, with great heroism and at an appalling cost in ships and men, the U-boat menace was defeated but, as the next war was to show, an indelible impression had been made on popular imagination.

Two minor mysteries remain. The first I heard from an ex-soldier who had it from a World War II sailor (quite literally a "friend of a friend" story). It was said that the loathing of British seamen for the German submariner was so great that surrendered U-boat men had once been pushed alive into the boiler furnaces of a British ship. I was later astonished to find this tale appearing in Malcolm Lowry's disturbing classic *Under the Volcano* (Lowry 1962:38-39), though relocated to the Pacific where, in 1914-18, neither Q-ship nor U-boat ever sailed. Maritime folklore? Suppressed history? I did not know until I read an official—or at least semi-official—version. The tale is based on the true encounter between the Q-ship *Baralong* and U-27, surprised while attacking and boarding the mule-carrier *Nicosian*.

Some extraordinary stories were in circulation after this sinking. The Germans alleged that the *Baralong* had shot survivors of U-27 in cold blood. As time went on, it was even alleged that the British had thrust living submarine sailors into the boiler furnaces of the *Nicosian* (Jameson 1965:172). The most that would be admitted in the official report was that when marines searched *Nicosian* for Germans possibly still aboard her, they found six "who succumbed to injuries they had received" (Jameson 1965). There is no mention of the furnaces (Liddle 1985:100). Lowry's version involved only a Q-ship (ironically named *Samaritan*) and a U-boat and specified that it was the officers and not a random group of survivors who went into the furnace. Private information? Artistic "sharpening up"? At this distance in time we are unlikely ever to learn the truth.

Another item I take as pure legend, perhaps reflecting the breezy self-confidence of World War I rather than the more realistic assessments of the later conflict, was the assertion that German submariners were issued photographs purporting to be of their white-haired old mothers for use when surrendering, the said picture to be held up in one raised hand and accompanied by cries of *"Kamerad."*

Between the wars

In the euphoria of victory—and in naval terms it was overwhelming victory—British officialdom virtually turned its back on the submarine. (Germany had none left and was for many years prohibited from building any. No war was expected for at least ten years, and even at that Japan was marked down as the likely foe, her big battleships being the focus of concern. More advanced thinkers were already looking to the air.) Anti-submarine measures, as developed by 1918, were felt to ensure that "the submarine would never again be the menace it had been in 1917," and as late as March 1939 Winston Churchill was of the opinion that "the submarine has been mastered" (Terraine 1989:177).

Despite this lack of official enthusiasm, submarine development did take place but with nothing to grip the public imagination. Only in the United States was "scuttlebutt" (maritime rumour) at all in evidence. In 1926, at the height of Prohibition, there were rumours that bootleggers were (or would be) using a submarine to bring in contraband liquor. (German cargo-carrying submarines had gotten through the British blockade to the United States before 1917, so the tale had some credibility [Waters 1971:107].) A variant of the rumours was that the bootleggers had purchased an old U-boat to hit at inconvenient American revenue vessels (BBC 1994).

More impact was made on the public by the fact that between November 1918 and September 1939, at least forty-three submarines were lost in maritime disasters more as a result of human error it seems than mechanical failures. One such loss was L-24, in 1924. At a fundraising event "held while the authorities made up their mind as to what a brave man's life was worth," a specially composed poem was recited; its sixth line: "A Submarine. How sinister a name" (Gatwick 1997:148). In 1939, on the very eve of war, two spectacular disasters seized the attention of the public. On May 23 the *USS Squalus* sank stern down off Plymouth, New Hampshire, with some fifty-eight persons on board. Twenty-six died, but in thirty-six hours *Squalus* had been raised and was later recommissioned as *Sailfish.* Ten days later an overloaded *Thetis*, on trials off Liverpool,

went down by the bow and became stuck in the mud. Minor design faults had proved fatal and the rescue procedures were botched. Only five men got out; ninety-nine died. Eventually *Thetis* too was raised and recommissioned as *Thunderbolt*. She was the last lost vessel to be the subject of a memorial card (Harris 1993:150). When war came losses could not be advertised in this traditional way, so a custom died.

The loss of *Thetis* made a profound impression, leading Edward Young in his autobiographical *One of Our Submarines* to write of "the average man's almost superstitious horror of submarines." He continued, "In times of peace submarines rarely hit the newspaper headlines unless something goes wrong and one of them is lost" (Young 1952:12). Although denying any apprehensions of his own, Young's sanguine views do not appear to have been shared by his publishers in their choice of dust jacket, where the skull and bones are not the submariner's badge of victory but a symbol of death and the ominously trailing title invites us to supply those two words, well remembered from wartime by those old enough: "is missing."

World War II

On September 3, 1939, when Great Britain declared war on Germany, thirty-nine U-boats were already in position around the British Isles but, strangely enough, World War II did not produce the same outbreaks of "periscopitis" that characterised the years 1914-18 (but see Terraine 1989:673). Professor John Widdowson (born 1935) has testified "that in my family there was a strong belief among the older generation that at least some people in the Irish ports were . . . collaborating with the Nazis, and specifically with U-boats" (Widdowson 1998).

In the early months of the war the young Hammond Innes, then a journalist on the *Financial Times*, published his first book, *Wreckers Must Breathe*, in which the old fear-fantasy of traitors refuelling U-boats is raised to the highest power with the tale of a full-scale U-boat base having been established in abandoned mine workings under the cliffs of North Cornwall. Other minor legend

motifs are also used—the fisherman's line snagged on an unidentified, fast moving underwater object, the encounter on the shore with a stranger with suspiciously wet trouser legs and English so exquisite that there is speculation that he might have been a wandering BBC announcer! There is even the motif of local superstition being exploited to discourage the inquisitive, an old theme in traditional tales of smuggling (Innes 1940:*passim*). I am not aware of this fiction ever being taken as based on fact though it might well have generated localised rumour.

Just as Lawrence and his wife were natural suspects in World War I, so in the next war was Kurt Hahn of Gordonstoun School. Those involved with this German-led institution on the Moray Firth in the vicinity of important airfields just had to be signalling to U-boats. Staff and students were barred from the Home Guard when they volunteered (Coghill 1994). Another isolated tale comes from Dorset. The Bull Inn at Bridport is the scene of "an unconfirmed story" of a U-boat captain fancying a run ashore. He is said to have dined at the inn and returned to his boat unrecognised. His shore-going clothes are not described but one presumes his leathers and white cap were left behind (Ashley 1987:25).

In wartime memoirs by Mr. F. Bousfield we are told of a party of German miners on an exchange visit to Britain staying at a small hotel on the Northumberland coast. One was a former U-boat man who said his boat had often been in that area recharging its batteries at night. He had watched the comings and goings at that very hotel and wished he could have rowed ashore for a pint or two of beer. "The fancy was very strong at times" (SAGA 1995:9).

However, during World War II as far as Britain was concerned, parachutists rather than U-boats provided most raw material for the rumour trade. It was in the United States that U-boat stories seem to have had the widest circulation and developed the most bizarre forms. America already had a native tradition about "Blue Light Federalists"—pro-British elements who, in the War of 1812, signalled to enemy warships offshore by means of blue lights. Although the expression can hardly have been well known or much used in Britain, it still featured in the 1952 edition of Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable.*

Indeed, despite the well-known existence of more sophisticated means of communication, flashing lights are a key motif in popular submarine tales. Michael Mason (later claimed as inspiring the James Bond character) is said to have been sent to Ireland by Naval Intelligence and there, on the West Coast, to have killed a man "caught signalling out to sea" (Cathcart 1997). On a lighter note in Jim Hitchmough's 1993 BBC drama "The Bullion Boys," stolen British gold is to be transferred to a U-boat called in by a light flashing from the upper window of a sea-front house.

Immediately after hostilities began the rumour mill went into production. Just after Pearl Harbour it was claimed at Oahu that a dog was barking messages in Morse Code to a lurking Japanese submarine (Fussell 1989:40 though unsourced). Soon Texas began making its contribution with tales of secret refuelling bases and German sailors seen at a Galveston cinema. U-boat men were found to speak perfect English. Spy rings and saboteurs were everywhere (Wiggins 1995:*passim*). A story circulating in Florida told of a captured U-boat that had in its galley milk from a Miami dairy and bread from a local bakery (Fussell 1989:39). Off New England in 1941, the mysterious sinking of the pleasure boat *The Raven* led to fresh rumour. Only the bodies of the captain and fourteen women passengers were recovered; the men, rumour had it, had been abducted by U-boats for use as slave labour. The "foreigner" Semicek is (speculatively) accused of flashing lights out to sea (Landesman 1997:*passim* and161).

Only long after the war was it firmly established that a German submarine, U-862, known to have been active off Australia, had crossed to New Zealand in the closing months of the war, had entered Gisborne Harbour, and had fired one torpedo at a ship off Napier. Press reports of this episode yielded a familiar tale. Each night Captain Timms would surface to get some fresh air while he and his crew took turns to watch the girls at a dancehall near the harbour. In an extension of the story, young crewmen with farm experience went ashore to milk the local cows. Although this yarn was denied and declared "grossly improbable" by the boat's former chief petty officer, a retired Napier farmer claimed to recall that his cows did go

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mysteriously dry one day towards the end of the war (*The Times*, 18 January 1994:13).

A tale of Japanese submariners going ashore for water near Karamea, had it been given the same press exposure, would have been received with less equanimity (*Review*, December 1993).

On May 31, 1942, three Japanese midget submarines launched an attack in Sydney Harbour. Two were destroyed but the third has never been accounted for. This unprecedented (and unrepeated) event naturally generated the familiar stories. Lights were seen coming from the sea and being returned from the shore. After the attack two Japanese were said to have been seen on a nearby beach (Fisher 1992).

Once Japan entered the war her submarines were known to be active off Australia's Northern Territory, and in 1942 one of them, I-124, was depth-charged and sunk a few miles off Darwin by an American destroyer and an Australian corvette. Papers and code books were recovered straight away and the site was declared a war grave in 1977. Sometime in the 1980s the story was being circulated that I-124 had carried thirty tonnes of mercury as part of a trimming system and that this mercury was now leaking into the sea. "Logical" developments of this baseless tale were that local fish were now contaminated and that children were becoming ill from eating it. Property values were being affected and the phrase "ecological time bomb" was in circulation. To make matters worse a second, hitherto undetected submarine was said to be in the vicinity. I-124 did not carry any mercury, nor was the existence of the second submarine confirmed. The whole episode is a classic example of the "sinister submarine" motif (*Guardian*, 27 August 1989).

The South American Legends

There can be no dispute that Nazi war criminals—perhaps as many as a thousand—found Argentina to be a safe haven for their post-war retirement. In May 1997 a commission drawn from both the academic and the Jewish communities began combing through documents declassified by Argentinian President Carlos Menem in

1992 in order to establish the true facts of Juan Peron's pro-Nazi activities. The commission was also seeking written proof that, at the end of the war, U-boats brought "stolen Jewish gold" to landing places in Patagonia (*The Times*, 28 May 1997:14). Earlier variant stories had added foreign currency, paintings and other art treasures to these clandestine cargoes (*Observer Magazine*, 17 May 1992).

In December 1996 a team of Argentinian coast guards with divers had carried out a brief and seemingly perfunctory search for the presumed lost U-boats in the San Matias Gulf area of Rio Negro province (*The Times*, 1 December 1996). The story of the gold-carrying U-boats had already provided the plot—with much circumstantial detail of their proposed landfall—for Patrick O'Hara's 1978 "superthriller of the year," *The Wohldorf Shipment* (O'Hara 1978). The final and fullest version of the story, however, was yet to come. On hearing of Germany's unconditional surrender and the order to surface and await instructions from the Allied authorities, Heinz Schaeffer, who commanded U-977, decided instead to surrender in Argentina where, he believed, a sympathetic reception was more likely to be found. After a perilous voyage, including a claimed sixty-six days underwater, U-977 reached South America, where Schaeffer heard that U-530 had also arrived only to be handed over to the Americans. He decided to put into a port nevertheless and so became a prisoner of war on the cruiser *Belgrano*. During his interrogation, *El Dia*, a Montevideo newspaper, carried a story that U-977 had brought Hitler to Patagonia en route to Antarctica. An Anglo-American commission arrived and repeatedly pressed Schaeffer to confirm this fantastic tale, a process continued by the British when Schaeffer was returned to Europe. Nevertheless this tallest of tall tales still had life in it in Latin America. A Buenos Aires author, Ladislas Szabo, published his *Hitler Is Alive: The New Berchtesgaden in Antarctica*, its first chapter being "El Enigmo de los Submarinos," claiming that U-530 and U-977 had escorted a convoy. Apart from his personal embarrassment, Schaeffer felt that these fantasies, if believed, would create a dangerous "myth of expectations" in Germany, which prompted him to publish his own story of the U-977 voyage (Schaeffer 1952:*passim*).

The story of the gold-carrying submarine was, however, due to surface yet again. In August 1993, U-534 was raised after forty-eight years on the seabed off the Danish island of Anholt where she had been sunk by a Liberator bomber on May 5, 1945. Hitler's successor, Admiral Doenitz, had ordered all U-boats still in German waters to be scuttled but U-534 sailed for Norway, which was then still under German occupation. This boat belonged to an ocean-going class with a potential range of 11,000 miles. Similar vessels had taken valuable cargoes to Japan so it was inevitable that the dripping hull of U-534 should have stirred old legends into life. Gold? Stolen paintings? Documentation of the Holocaust? Senior Nazis en route for Argentina or Brazil? All these possible discoveries were hopefully talked about. The most exciting finds turned out to be a hundred bottles of German white wine, many still intact, and a gross of condoms (*The Times*, 5 June 1993; *Sunday Times*, 29 August 1993). Peer Kluewer, described as a naval historian, piled fantasy on fantasy by claiming that the condoms, their numbers now increased to 2,000, had been intended to be individually inflated and left floating on the surface to confuse enemy radar (*Daily Record*, 28 September 1993, via *Fortean Times*).

Another curious cargo, alleged though never actually found in any recovered U-boat, was a supply of "animal intestines to shoot to the surface to deceive those imagining their depth charges had done the job." Another version of this tale postulated severed arms and legs carried in cold storage for the same purpose (Fussell 1989:272).

The Postwar Years

The practical utility of the submarine is undeniable. What was only rumoured in Prohibition days in America—the use of submarines by bootleggers—became fact in the drug wars of the 1990s. In February 1997, Ludwig "Tarzan" Fainberg, a Miami strip club owner, was alleged in court proceedings to have been negotiating for the purchase of a Russian Piranha class submarine for use by Colombian drug cartels. Some years earlier, in September 1994, a 10-meter-long submarine used for carrying drugs had been seized by Colombian

security forces, the second such capture in twelve months (*The Times*, 30 September 1994:11, with picture, from Reuters). Anti-drug agents were reported as saying, "We did not expect submarines." Likewise, World War I rumours of trained sea lions were realised in Ukraine's now decommissioned squad of kamikaze dolphins (BBC 6 P.M. News, 12 September 1995; *Daily Telegraph*, 23 July 1997:16).

Sven Rosen, a writer in *Fortean Times* (February-March 1992:32-33) favoured the neutral term "Unidentified Submarine Objects" (USOs) in connection with reported strange happenings in Swedish coastal waters between 1982 and 1992. Swedish naval authorities had been receiving regular reports of alleged submarine sightings, and their own monitoring activities led them to accept that there was evidence of foreign submarines in territorial waters close to the Swedish coast. Interpretations of these reports varied wildly. The official Soviet view was of "mythical violations designed to prejudice Swedish-Soviet relations and to gain more budget allocations for arms" (*Soviet News*, 7 May 1983), while the foreword to *Jane's Fighting Ships 1984* asserted that not only did Soviet penetration of Swedish territorial waters continue unabated but that Soviet special units also regularly came ashore (*Guardian*, 23 August 1984). In 1996 however, the suspicion seemingly came to an end when a Swedish scientific commission found that the rotational movement of swimming mink could produce the same readings as for submarine propellers (but cf. Meurger 1988:82 for a more speculative origin of the "Soviet threat").

USO is a useful term but our interest must focus on the interpretation and rationalisation that come after the sighting. As Meurger puts it, "The moment of experience is less important than the later reworking . . . and the social pressure upon it, to fit cultural patterning" (1988:preface). In the past, before Nemo's *Nautilus* was launched upon the seas, a USO had to be a sea monster. After Verne, some kind of submarine was a more rational and socially acceptable explanation. This interaction between monster and submarine is a continuing theme in Meurger's complex and complicated study. Let us take some examples. Quebec's Lake Saint François had both a

monster tradition (though of a monster of diverse forms) and tales of a small contraband-carrying submarine (Meurger 1988:60-61). In another testimony (67) we are told, "There must be a man who has a sub in the village." Moving to Lake Megantic the story becomes even more interesting. Journalist Guy Lavoie had heard wartime rumours of U-boats venturing into the St. Lawrence and, as a hoax, invented a story of a U-boat wreck having been discovered in the lake. There was serious talk of an expedition being mounted to find it, and later divers reported encounters with something casting "a shadow that was very big." Here the fake submarine story may well be on the way to generating another monster tale.

Meurger weaves monster traditions and postulated submarines into every possible relationship, but the most dramatic transformation of the one into the other is found well away from his home ground of Quebec. In his Appendix 6, "The Mythical Landscape of Chile," Meurger discusses the folklore generated on the dangerous coast of Southern Chile where the disappearance of ships and their crews was common enough to create a "folklore of the lost" (274), postulating colonies of castaways, even a whole city of the shipwrecked. These, in turn, generated sailors' yarns about those who "claimed to have experienced the legend in reality." Other stories blamed shipwrecks on the Camahueto, a monster that "gorged itself on entire crews" (280). A third tale concerned the *Caleuche*, originally a phantom ship with a crew of witches that by the end of the nineteenth century had become a submersible. Meurger cites a traveller of 1882 who reported, "They think that all the drowned are taken on board a fantastic vessel called the *Caleuche*, a sort of Nautilus with a crew of witches. It travels underwater . . . to pick up the shipwrecked, who must remain within it for ever"(282).

Compare the speculations that arose from the loss of *The Raven* on another coast long haunted by tales of ghost ships (Landesman 1997). In some versions of the *Caleuche* tale the vessel is used by witches for smuggling; in others it is a pirate ship seizing entire crews who are later released—though only as gibbering madmen with no knowledge of what had happened. A variant suggests that the

witch crew would sometimes buy the silence of captives with immense wealth, thus obviating the need for mass internments but also providing an explanation for the acquisition of sudden wealth by unlikely people on shore. (Compare the Maltese fishermen who were said to have conducted clandestine trade with submarines [Cassar-Pullicino 1994].) The *Caleuche* is a remarkable case of fishermen's localised oral traditions evolving and becoming fully integrated into modern speculation and fantasy.

How far do the "solidified rumours" discussed in this essay conform to a recognised contemporary legend pattern? When this study was first conceived it was to be a simple assemblage of submarine-linked material—signal lights from the shore, secret supplying and refuelling activity, clandestine landings, etc. Only in midstream, as it were, did a parallel with an established legend pattern become clear. In her analysis of the "Image in Glass" theme, Barbara Allen Bogart suggested a four-part structure (Bennett and Smith 1996:145) in which a technical innovation becomes fused with a traditional motif (loathsome creatures being cited as a possible example) by means of a powerful emotion (e.g., fear) so that the imagined potentialities of the new phenomenon become the subject of realistic narrative. We certainly see this pattern with the sinister submarine rumours.

The first sightings of Captain Nemo's *Nautilus* reported a sea monster, and in Verne's narrative the biological metaphor is favoured throughout—"the beast of sheet iron," "the huge fish of steel." The names chosen for early submarines all tend to support the dangerous creature analogy, for example *Alligator*, *Narwhal*, *Diable-marin*, *Draken*, *Intelligent Whale*, *Morse*, *Tarantula*, *Viper* (Compton Hall 1983:index), but the name *Shark*, perhaps the most hated and feared of all sea creatures, first used for an American boat about 1901, was to become the predominant symbol of the submarine as ruthless killer.

Let us conclude where we began. Artist Tom McKendrick could think of "no other machine that provokes such a wide range of emotions in human beings as the submarine." In World War I the

submarine was "the most formidable thing" (Jameson 1965:title page) and, by World War II, "one of the most mythologised weapons of war" (Hadley 1995:dust jacket). It has replaced "the monster of the deep" as the all-purpose agent of otherwise unexplained maritime loss whether actively or, in the form of sunken and abandoned hulks, passively leaking their nuclear poison from the seabed. Whether as iron coffin, steel shark, latterday monster of the deep, or, less probably, guarantor of world peace, the submarine remains the ultimate embodiment of mankind's maritime fantasies. It is the archetypal ship of dreams.

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